Division of Operations | Bureau of Recreation

2016 Cranberry Lake Public Campground Unit Management Plan Amendment PUBLIC DRAFT

Town of Clifton, St. Lawrence County, New York

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New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

Division of Operations, 3rd Floor

625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233

Governor KATHY C. HOCHUL | Interim Commissioner SEAN MAHAR

UNIT MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENT #1

Preface

The Department of Environmental Conservation ("Department") developed this amendment to the 2016 Unit Management Plan for the Cranberry Lake Public Campground Intensive Use Area pursuant to, and consistent with, relevant provisions of the Environmental Conservation Law (ECL), the Executive Law, the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan ("Master Plan"), DEC rules and regulations, Department policies and procedures, and the State Environmental Quality Review Act.

The Cranberry Lake Public Campground is classified by the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan as an Intensive Use Campground and Day Area and is managed by the Department as such with an emphasis on the area's rustic and natural value. The Cranberry Lake Public Campground is pursuant to all statutes and laws related to the governance and management of Intensive Use Areas as outlined by the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) and Department.

The APA initially adopted the Master Plan in 1972 with advice from and in consultation with the Department, pursuant to Executive Law §807, now recodified as Executive Law §816. The Master Plan provides the overall framework for the development and management of State lands in the Adirondack Park, including those State lands which are the subject of this amendment.

Executive Law §816 requires the Department to develop, in consultation with the APA, individual unit management plans (UMPs) for each unit of land under the Department's jurisdiction which is classified in one of the nine classifications set forth in the Master Plan. The UMPs must conform to the guidelines and criteria set forth in the Master Plan. Thus, UMPs implement and apply the Master Plan's general guidelines for areas of land within the Adirondack Park. To put the implementation of the guidelines and criteria set forth in the Master Plan into actual practice, the Department and APA have signed a Memorandum of Understanding concerning the implementation of the State Land Master Plan for the Adirondack Park. The document defines the roles and responsibilities of the two agencies, outlines procedures for coordination and communication, defines a process for the revision of the Master Plan, as well as outlines procedures for State land classification, the review of UMPs, state land project management, and state land activity compliance.

This project has been reviewed in light of Commissioner Policy 49 (CP-49). This project does not pose a risk for climate change, greenhouse gas emissions, or sea level rise. It does not further impact disadvantaged communities.

DEC developed this Unit Management Plan Amendment for the Cranberry Lake Public Campground to allow installation of an accessible playground in the area of the amphitheater. This will enhance the recreational experience of visitors to Cranberry

Lake Campground. Consistent with the above statutory authority and the Master Plan, this amendment proposes the construct of a playground that will maintain the area's rustic feel through aesthetic choices related to the playground.

Background

The Cranberry Lake Campground is located just south of the Hamlet of Cranberry Lake in the Town of Clifton. It is accessible by vehicle from Lone Pine Road. The DEC Division of Operations manages the site.

Cranberry Lake's impoundment and size is the result of a concrete dam constructed in 1916. By virtue of a law passed in 1865, the stated purpose of which was to improve navigation and hydraulic power and check freshets on the Oswegatchie River, the predecessor of the present dam at Cranberry Lake Village was erected in 1867. Dam construction and acquisition of lands for flooding, maintenance and regulation of the dam are matters handled by the Commissioners for Improvements on the Oswegatchie River. The lands this body acquired have been held to be State lands but not part of the Forest Preserve.

Cranberry Lake Campground has developed through several phases of construction. The Civilian Conservation Corps developed the original 15 camping sites in 1935. Work was accomplished with hand tools and wheelbarrows. The supervisor's cabin was constructed in 1937 and the date and several names were engraved in the foundation. Bathhouses and vault latrines followed. Expansion consisted of construction of the "peninsula loop," which was completed in the early 1960s. At this location, some of the most desirable camping sites are to be found. Loops I-V were completed in the late 1960s. They more than tripled the occupancy capacity of the campground and contain prime waterfront sites. The lifeguard cabin, garage, and amphitheater were also constructed at this time. A central shower house was constructed in 1979. In 2001, a 12' x 24' addition was constructed, along with rehabilitation of the original structure. This included adding new showers and dressing stalls, a tile floor, siding, roof, ventilation, and ADA accessibility. Additional buildings constructed were a 20' x 40' picnic pavilion in 1991 and a 16' x 24' recycling center in 1992.

In spring 1993, an Environmental Education Program was started at the campground and a 16' x 18' cabin was built to house an Environmental Education Assistant and a Park and Recreation Aide IV to oversee the program. This program was designed to provide activities for campers of all ages, with both day and nighttime activities scheduled. Although very popular, the program may not be provided every year due to staff and funding limitations.

In 1992, water wells were developed and put in use as the preferred alternate water source to comply with the new "Drinking Water Regulations" under the State Sanitary Code. Two 10' x 10' pump houses were also constructed. Alternate or backup wells were drilled in 1999 and were put in use in 2002.

The latest building to be constructed, in 2002, was the 18' x 26' comfort station in the Upper Loop of original Campground Sites 1-13. This modern flush bathroom replaced the old vault dry toilets.

Federal monies were involved in improvements at this campground under the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The Department of Interior, through the National Park Service, requires that this facility be inspected every five years. This inspection, conducted by the grant administrator in the DEC Central Office, is to ensure the facilities continue to be properly maintained and used in conformity with the grant award. A Land and Water Conservation Fund sign is posted at each campground where federal funds have been involved.

Facility Selection and Implementation

The construction of a playground is not proposed in the 2016 Unit Management Plan, and as a result this amendment seeks to allow for the construction of a playground in the parking lot area, replacing the current amphitheater. To conform aesthetically to guidelines related to Intensive Use Areas, natural materials such as cedar logs, mortise, and tenon joinery will be attempted to be used in the construction of the project. Once implemented, the playground will complement the environment and contribute to the preexisting rustic feel of the campground and surrounding natural area. The goal of this amendment is to allow for a playground that benefits the recreation of campers while still maintaining the primitive aesthetic important to the Adirondack Park.

We can look to other Intensive Use Areas for examples of playgrounds that blend well with the local aesthetic of the area.

Management and Selection of Preferred Surface Alternatives for ADA Compliance

Alternative 1 – Poured Rubber

The base of the playground could be filled in with a poured rubber surface, ensuring the highest possible level of accessibility as outlined in the 2011 ADA standards (Marshall, 2011). These types of surfaces generally tend to have the least possible maintenance and upkeep, but the highest initial cost by a significant margin. They are easy to fill but can freeze if the grade isn’t steep enough (due to the pooling of surface water), causing it to degrade at a much faster rate.

While this material is the most compliant, high cost, risk of high rates of degradation (due to grade and proximity to Cranberry Lake) and typically unrealistic life of the material (due to general humid and wet weather conditions in the area) makes this option expensive.

Alternative 2 – Shredded Rubber

Shredded rubber could fill in the base of the playground. While shredded rubber isn't ADA compliant to the highest possible degree, it still fulfills the majority of ADA compliance aspects, including falls up to 10 feet (Marshall, 2011). Maintenance is very low, but high temperatures can cause a gas-off, and the material tends to get everywhere, lowering the aesthetic value of the area. While there are no protected wetlands in the area surrounding the Cranberry Lake Campground that are at risk, rubber being able to get into the Cranberry Lake could potentially cause negative environmental impacts such as heavy metals leaching into the water and soil surrounding the lake.

Alternative 3 – Wood Chips

Wood chips, while not rated at the highest ADA level, are a relatively inexpensive alternative as a playground surface. They are approved for falls up to 10 feet (Marshall, 2011), and are inexpensive as an initial cost. The main problem with wood chips is the maintenance – they must be maintained constantly to ensure that they don't decompose. Especially in an area with a humid and hot climate in summers, this can be a problem, as decomposing will likely be quicker than other places. The drainage is also poor, which could prove problematic in an area close to large bodies of water and prone to high rates of rain. Aesthetically, they do fit in with the rustic idea of the Adirondack Park.

Alternative 4 – Artificial Grass with Rubber infill

This alternative, along with the poured rubber is the most satisfactory in terms of ADA compliance. The creation of an artificial turf is an expensive option, however, and does not blend in with the rustic qualities outlined in the management of Intensive Use Areas designated in the initial Unit Management Plan for the site. However, the grass will likely not displace the same way normal loose shredded rubber would and would degrade much slower than the other ADA compliant rubber – the turf however is at risk for bacterial diseases like MRSA if not taken care of properly.

Alternative 5 – No Surfacing

This alternative is to not surface at all the playground area. Not only does this not satisfy the ADA standards, it also is dangerous. Unkempt grass can hide ticks and other animals, and things like large stones, rocks, and animals could impede proper play in the playground area. This as an alternative is untenable with the building of a new playground meant to be accessible.

Alternative 6 – Rubber Mats / Tiles

This alternative is the use of rubber mats or tiling to surface the area on which the playground will sit. While the most expensive option, it provides the biggest benefit in ADA compliance, safety, maintenance, and leaching threat. The rubber mat allows for low maintenance, and falls up to 12 feet (Marshall, 2011). It is also one of the few

materials that follows ADA compliance fully, allowing for the greatest accessibility. Since it is one large piece of rubber as well, off-gassing is not as much an issue as the shredded rubber, and there is no danger of it getting everywhere.

Alternatives Analysis Conclusion

This alternatives assessment evaluated the feasibility of all known potential opportunities to achieve the stated project goals of ADA compliance, prevention of environmental degradation, and aesthetics as follows:
Alternative 1: Poured Rubber
Alternative 2: Shredded Rubber
Alternative 3: Wood Chips
Alternative 4: Artificial Grass with Rubber Infill
Alternative 5: No Surfacing
Alternative 6: Rubber Mats / Tiles

The preferred alternative was selected based on several factors, including:

- Effectiveness of achieving stated project goals
- Project site is held to the highest possible ADA standards
- Future disturbance of surrounding site is unlikely
- Safety from falls for playground users
- Cost / benefit analysis in terms of initial cost and maintenance
- Minimization of environmental impacts and blending with the surrounding environment

Rubber Mats / Tiles meet more of these factors than any other alternative – and as such, is the conclusive choice for this project.

Selection of Location and Analysis Conclusion

Alternative 1: Location adjacent to Cranberry Lake

The first alternative location for the new playground is close to the water, in the day-use area adjacent to the beach. This is a core area for both campers and day users to gather. Access to many other facility amenities is in proximity making this an appealing location for a playground. There would not have to be new vegetative clearing for this location, however topographic alterations would be required. A primary concern with this alternative is the proximity to the waterfront. The Master Plan requires new structures located on the shorelines of lakes be set back a minimum of 150 feet from the mean high water mark. In addition, new structures located on shorelines must be reasonably screened from the water. These guidelines are for the purpose of maintaining a natural shoreline for visitors. Being close to the beach, anyone who wants an unimpeded view of the lake from the day-use area would have to contend with this structure. This alternative would add to the development of the shoreline and affect those on the lake looking towards the day-use area. Ensuring the natural character of the shoreline is a condition the Department is seeking to attain.

Alternative 2: Location near campground loops

The second alternative location for the new playground is inside one of the camping loops for easy access for campers. This would most likely be in camping loop V, as it has the most adjacent campsites for maximum use.
Loop 1: 23
Loop 2: 24
Loop 3: 21
Loop IV: 16
Loop V: 27

Loop V is also in walking distance from Loop 1 and parts of Loops II and IV. While this location is relatively centralized to the campsites, it could potentially alienate day-use visitors as well. Based on location, the playground could put undue stress on the facility and campers as whole. Putting it in a camping loop area creates new traffic, and in an area with high amounts of pedestrians could prove dangerous as well as put stress on the camp roads. Additionally, to accommodate this new playground, vegetative clearing would have to be undertaken to build a new parking lot and the playground itself. An increase in population surrounding the playground would also put high stress on the restrooms and likely necessitate a renovation of local restrooms and septic systems to deal with the increase in visitation to the camping loop. As a result of this, this alternative should not be as prioritized as others.

Alternative 3: Location in existing parking lot area

The third alternative location is in the older portion of the parking lot that is set to be repaved, where the amphitheater used to be located. In that area, there is already a basketball court and volleyball court, and it is located in close proximity to the day-use area. The existing pavement works well for rubber matting and tiling and would not need to be replaced for the playground to be built on top of it. Vegetative clearing and topographic alterations would be minimized as a result of this placement as well. The area is slightly sloped as well, and as such, poses no real issue for drainage, meaning maintenance would be minimal. The area is also located behind trees, meaning that it would not provide any visual impacts to the area. This project looks to utilize already existing infrastructure and building locations so that the view is not impeded. It also is situated near other day-use structures towards the front of the park, meaning it will see a good deal of use throughout the season. Because of the location as well, it can't be easily seen from the beach or water, posing no serious detriment to the rustic character of the campground and the Adirondack Park as a whole.

Location Alternatives Analysis Conclusion

This alternatives assessment evaluated the feasibility of all known potential opportunities to achieve the stated project goals. The goals in mind are for the structure to be low maintenance, high usage, and low initial cost. Low vegetative clearing / topographic alterations, and aesthetics were also considered goals.

Alternative 1: Location adjacent to Cranberry Lake
Alternative 2: Location near campground loop
Alternative 3: Location near already existing parking lot area

Based on the stated project goals, alternative 3 is the suggested way forward through this project. Utilization of already existing day-use areas, minimal natural characteristic harming, low maintenance and location make this the most appropriate and clear answer for a location for this playground.

Selection of Playground and Materials

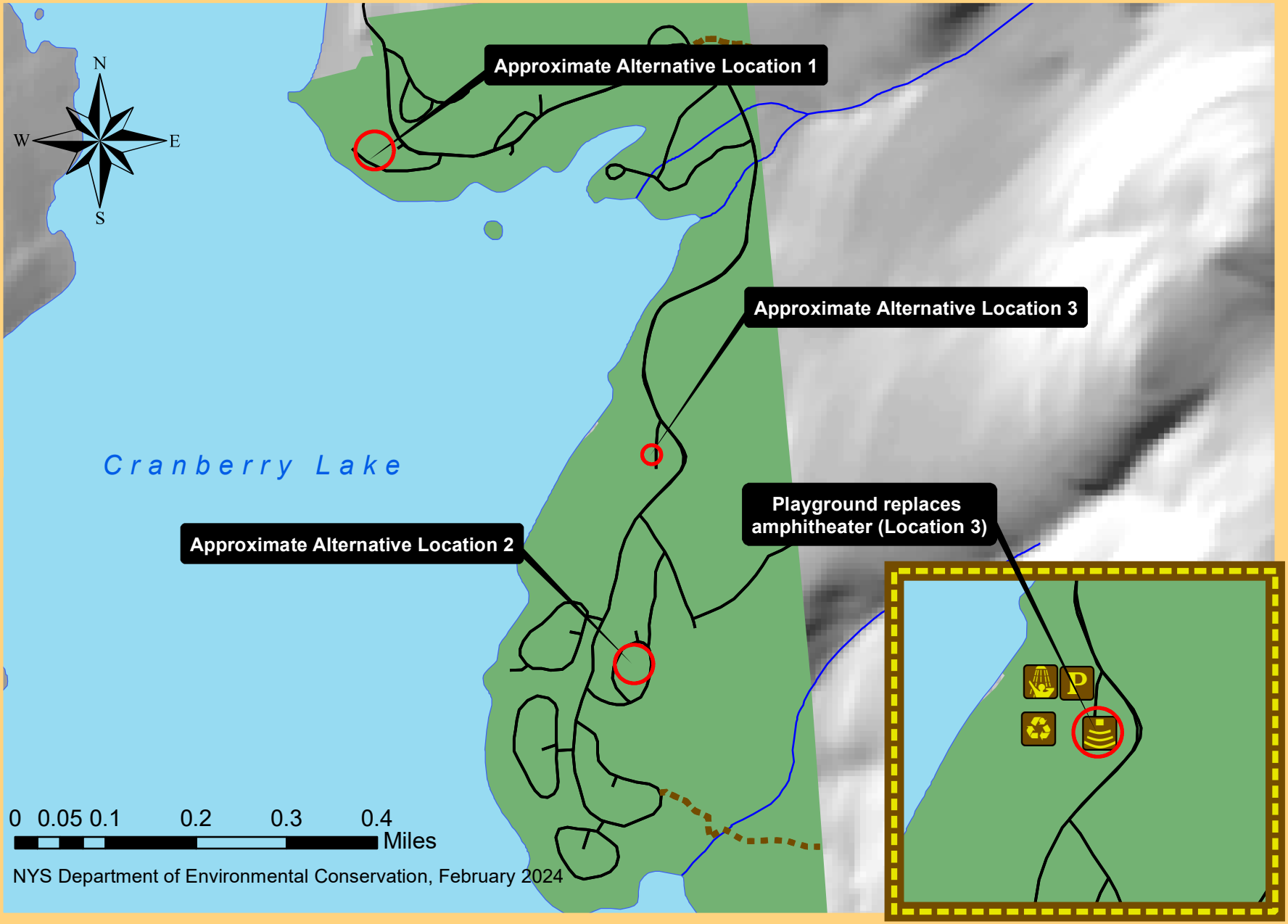
In terms of playground construction, a large playground made with natural materials such as cedar wood is the most appropriate for the area. These playgrounds are large enough for a day-use area and made almost entirely of natural materials to blend in better with the rustic character of the Adirondack Park. Both Lincoln Pond and Meacham Lake Campgrounds (see appendix) have playgrounds in this style and are also DEC managed campgrounds within the Adirondack Park.

Facility Maintenance and Construction

The construction and maintenance of this playground facility is outlined as such:

1. Site leveling, according to proper installation requirements of accessible surfacing. Minimal with existing pavement.
2. Minimal initial high pruning considering placement and best management practices.
3. Playground structure to be installed by contractor under supervision of the department.
4. Playground will be inspected and maintained according to department policy.
5. Accessible aspects will be inspected for compliance annually by ADA coordinator.
6. Area will be patrolled daily for general maintenance such as garbage removal, damage to structure / surfacing and cleanliness.

Cranberry Lake Campground
Playground Location Map



Cranberry Lake Campground Playground Location

Cranberry Lake Campground Playground Photodeck

NRP/JNP Stage

Recreation Structures

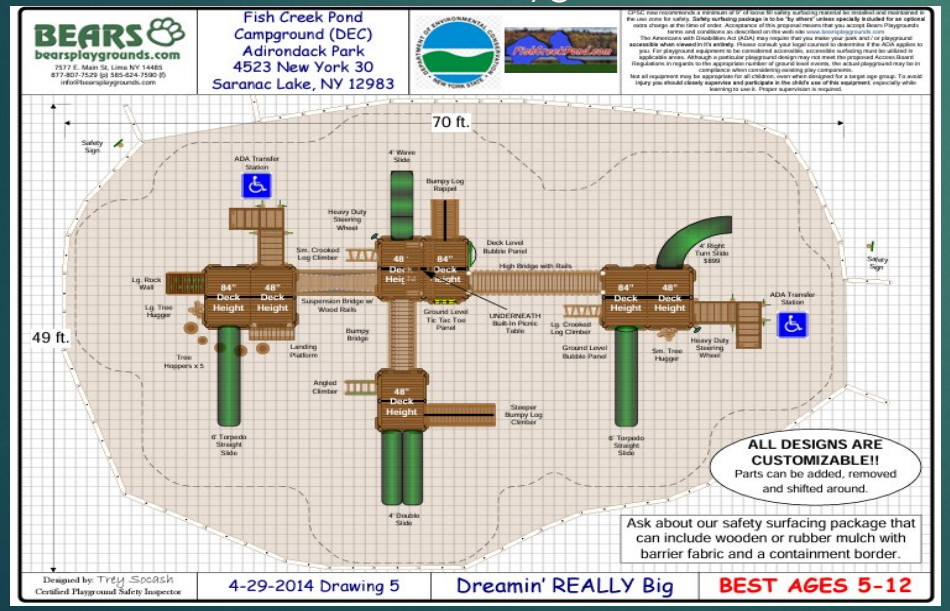
Parking lot intended use area for playground

Parking lot intended use area for playground

Recreation Field

Design Specifications

Frontier Town Playground Mats



Fish Creek Playground Blueprints

Lincoln Pond Playground

Meacham Lake Playground